

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 /033 W
-----128794 021039Z /15

P 021019Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1229
AMEMBASSY KABUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 09529

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, UR, AF
SUBJECT: EMBASSY'S OPINION OF SOVIET FIRST SECRETARY
ZOTOV

REF: STATE 110015

1. PRIOR TO ASSIGNMENT TO WASHINGTON IN DECEMBER, 1977, ALEKSANDR IVANOVICH ZOTOV WAS ONE OF EMBASSY'S MORE FORTHCOMING MFA CONTACTS. HE WAS SYRIA-LEBANON DESK OFFICER IN MFA NEAR EAST COUNTRIES DEPARTMENT FOR APPROXIMATELY TWO YEARS (1975-1977). PRIOR TO THAT HE SERVED IN IRAQ AND IN LIBYA. HE SEEMED TO BE WELL THOUGHT OF IN MFA BOTH PROFESSIONALLY AND PERSONALLY. HE ACCOMPANIED KOSYGIN TO DAMASCUS IN JULY 1976 AND SAT IN DURING ASAD'S TALKS IN MOSCOW IN APRIL, 1977.

2. EMBOFF MILES REMEMBERS ZOTOV WELL. IN HIS OPINION ZOTOV WAS ALWAYS WILLING TO SHARE AS MUCH INFORMATION AS HE WAS ALLOWED TO, WAS MORE WILLING THAN MOST MFA OFFICERS TO DISCUSS SEEMING CONTRADICTIONS IN SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY IN HIS AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY, AND WAS NEVER DELIBERATELY MISLEADING. IN MOSCOW CONTEXT, THESE ARE ALL UNUSUAL ATTRIBUTES.

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3. HOWEVER, IT MUST BE KEPT IN MIND THAT ZOTOV'S RANK DOES NOT ENTITLE HIM TO SPEAK WITH AUTHORITY ON WEIGHTY OR IMMEDIATE ISSUES FOR WHICH AN OFFICIAL LINE HAS NOT YET BEEN ESTABLISHED. THUS HIS PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS" OFTEN REMAIN JUST THAT AND SHOULD NOT NECESSARILY BE TAKEN AS EVIDENCE OF ANY PARTICULAR "SOVIET" INTERPRETATION OF EVENTS. TOON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENTS, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 02 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MOSCOW09529
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780186-0682
Format: TEL
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t197805102/aaaadjhl.tel
Line Count: 62
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 5037d593-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 110015
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2519274
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EMBASSY'S OPINION OF SOVIET FIRST SECRETARY ZOTOV
TAGS: PEPR, UR, AF, (ZOTOV, ALEKSANDR IVANOVICH)
To: STATE KABUL
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5037d593-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014